

What is claimed is:

1. A purified polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of:

- a) an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1,
- b) a naturally-occurring amino acid sequence having at least 90% sequence identity to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1,
- c) a biologically active fragment of the polypeptide having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1, and
- d) an immunogenic fragment of the polypeptide having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

2. An isolated polypeptide of claim 1, having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

3. An isolated polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide of claim 1.

4. An isolated polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide of claim 2.

5. An isolated polynucleotide of claim 4 comprising a sequence of SEQ ID NO:2

6. A recombinant polynucleotide comprising a promoter sequence operably linked to a polynucleotide of claim 3.

7. A cell transformed with a recombinant polynucleotide of claim 6.

8. A transgenic organism comprising a recombinant polynucleotide of claim 6.

9. A method for producing a polypeptide of claim 1, the method comprising:

- a) culturing a cell under conditions suitable for expression of the polypeptide, wherein said cell is transformed with a recombinant polynucleotide, and said recombinant polynucleotide comprises a promoter sequence operably linked to a polynucleotide encoding the polypeptide of claim 1, and
- b) recovering the polypeptide so expressed.

10. An isolated polynucleotide selected from the group consisting of:

- a) a polynucleotide comprising a polynucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:2

- b) a naturally occurring polynucleotide comprising a polynucleotide sequence at least 90% identical to a polynucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:2,
- c) a polynucleotide complementary to a polynucleotide of a),
- d) a polynucleotide complementary to a polynucleotide of b), and
- e) an RNA equivalent of a)-d).

11. An isolated polynucleotide comprising at least 60 contiguous nucleotides of a polynucleotide of claim 10.

12. A method for detecting a target polynucleotide in a sample, said target polynucleotide having a sequence of a polynucleotide of claim 10, the method comprising:

- a) hybridizing the sample with a probe comprising at least 20 contiguous nucleotides comprising a sequence complementary to said target polynucleotide in the sample, and which probe specifically hybridizes to said target polynucleotide, under conditions whereby a hybridization complex is formed between said probe and said target polynucleotide or fragments thereof, and
- b) detecting the presence or absence of said hybridization complex, and, optionally, if present, the amount thereof.

13. A method of claim 12, wherein the probe comprises at least 60 contiguous nucleotides.

14. A method for detecting a target polynucleotide in a sample, said target polynucleotide having a sequence of a polynucleotide of claim 10, the method comprising:

- a) amplifying said target polynucleotide or fragment thereof using polymerase chain reaction amplification, and
- b) detecting the presence or absence of said amplified target polynucleotide or fragment thereof, and, optionally, if present, the amount thereof.

15. A composition comprising a polypeptide of claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

16. A composition of claim 15, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence comprising a sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

17. A method for treating a disease or condition associated with decreased expression of functional P5CRH, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment the composition of claim 15.

18. A method for screening a compound for effectiveness as an agonist of a polypeptide of claim 1, the method comprising:

- a) exposing a sample comprising a polypeptide of claim 1 to a compound, and
- b) detecting agonist activity in the sample.

19. A composition comprising an agonist compound identified by a method of claim 18 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

20. A method for treating a disease or condition associated with decreased expression of functional P5CRH, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment a composition of claim 19.

21. A method for screening a compound for effectiveness as an antagonist of a polypeptide of claim 1, the method comprising:

- a) exposing a sample comprising a polypeptide of claim 1 to a compound, and
- b) detecting antagonist activity in the sample.

22. A composition comprising an antagonist compound identified by a method of claim 21 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

23. A method for treating a disease or condition associated with overexpression of functional P5CRH, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment a composition of claim 22.

24. A method of screening for a compound that specifically binds to the polypeptide of claim 1, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) combining the polypeptide of claim 1 with at least one test compound under suitable conditions, and
- b) detecting binding of the polypeptide of claim 1 to the test compound, thereby identifying a compound that specifically binds to the polypeptide of claim 1.

25. A method of screening for a compound that modulates the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1, said method comprising:

- a) combining the polypeptide of claim 1 with at least one test compound under conditions permissive for the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1,
- b) assessing the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1 in the presence of the test compound, and
- c) comparing the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1 in the presence of the test compound with

the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1 in the absence of the test compound, wherein a change in the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1 in the presence of the test compound is indicative of a compound that modulates the activity of the polypeptide of claim 1.

26. A method for screening a compound for effectiveness in altering expression of a target polynucleotide, wherein said target polynucleotide comprises a sequence of claim 5, the method comprising:

- a) exposing a sample comprising the target polynucleotide to a compound, under conditions suitable for the expression of the target polynucleotide,
- b) detecting altered expression of the target polynucleotide, and
- c) comparing the expression of the target polynucleotide in the presence of varying amounts of the compound and in the absence of the compound.

27. A method for assessing toxicity of a test compound, said method comprising:

- a) treating a biological sample containing nucleic acids with the test compound;
- b) hybridizing the nucleic acids of the treated biological sample with a probe comprising at least 20 contiguous nucleotides of a polynucleotide of claim 10 under conditions whereby a specific hybridization complex is formed between said probe and a target polynucleotide in the biological sample, said target polynucleotide comprising a polynucleotide sequence of a polynucleotide of claim 10 or fragment thereof;
- c) quantifying the amount of hybridization complex; and
- d) comparing the amount of hybridization complex in the treated biological sample with the amount of hybridization complex in an untreated biological sample, wherein a difference in the amount of hybridization complex in the treated biological sample is indicative of toxicity of the test compound.

28. An isolated antibody which specifically binds to a polypeptide of claim 1.

29. A diagnostic test for a condition or disease associated with the expression of P5CRH in a biological sample comprising the steps of:

- a) combining the biological sample with an antibody of claim 28, under conditions suitable for the antibody to bind the polypeptide and form an antibody:polypeptide complex; and
- b) detecting the complex, wherein the presence of the complex correlates with the presence of the polypeptide in the biological sample.

30. The antibody of claim 28, wherein the antibody is:

- a) a chimeric antibody,

- b) a single chain antibody,
- c) a Fab fragment,
- d) a F(ab')₂ fragment, or
- e) a humanized antibody.

31. A composition comprising an antibody of claim 28 and an acceptable excipient.

32. A method of diagnosing a condition or disease associated with the expression of P5CRH in a subject, comprising administering to said subject an effective amount of the composition of claim 31.

33. A composition of claim 31, wherein the antibody is labeled.

34. A method of diagnosing a condition or disease associated with the expression of P5CRH in a subject, comprising administering to said subject an effective amount of the composition of claim 33.

35. A method of preparing a polyclonal antibody with the specificity of the antibody of claim 28 comprising:

- a) immunizing an animal with a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1, or an immunogenic fragment thereof, under conditions to elicit an antibody response;
- b) isolating antibodies from said animal; and
- c) screening the isolated antibodies with the polypeptide, thereby identifying a polyclonal antibody which binds specifically to a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

36. An antibody produced by a method of claim 35.

37. A composition comprising the antibody of claim 36 and a suitable carrier.

38. A method of making a monoclonal antibody with the specificity of the antibody of claim 28 comprising:

- a) immunizing an animal with a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1, or an immunogenic fragment thereof, under conditions to elicit an antibody response;
- b) isolating antibody producing cells from the animal;
- c) fusing the antibody producing cells with immortalized cells to form monoclonal antibody-producing hybridoma cells;
- d) culturing the hybridoma cells; and
- e) isolating from the culture monoclonal antibody which binds specifically to a polypeptide

having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

39. A monoclonal antibody produced by a method of claim 38.

40. A composition comprising the antibody of claim 39 and a suitable carrier.

41. The antibody of claim 28, wherein the antibody is produced by screening a Fab expression library.

42. The antibody of claim 28, wherein the antibody is produced by screening a recombinant immunoglobulin library.

43. A method for detecting a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 in a sample, comprising the steps of:

- a) incubating the antibody of claim 28 with a sample under conditions to allow specific binding of the antibody and the polypeptide; and
- b) detecting specific binding, wherein specific binding indicates the presence of a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 in the sample.

44. A method of purifying a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 from a sample, the method comprising:

- a) incubating the antibody of claim 28 with a sample under conditions to allow specific binding of the antibody and the polypeptide; and
- b) separating the antibody from the sample and obtaining the purified polypeptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.